

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-17

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 3585

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AR

SUBJECT: THE UCR: WHERE IT STANDS TODAY

REF: BA-3485

1. SUMMARY: QUESTION OF LEADERSHIP OF UCR IS AND PROBABLY WILL REMAIN ON DEAD CENTER UNTIL SHAPE OF NEW GOVERNMENT BECOMES CLEAR. MEANWHILE, UCR, AS A POLICY, WILL COOPERATE WITH PERONISTS BUT, WILL NOT SHARE GOVT WITH THEM. UCR MEMBERS ARE FREE TO ACCEPT POSITIONS ON INDIVIDUAL BASIS, HOWEVER, END SUMMARY.

2. IN THE IMMEDIATE WAKE OF THE UCR' S CRUSHING DEFEAT ON MAR 11, THERE WERE CALLS FOR RICARDO BALBIN' S IMMEDIATE RESIGNATION AS PARTY LEADER. IT SEEMED CERTAIN THAT RAUL ALFONSIN WOULD BE ELECTED IN HIS PLACE. THE OUTCOME OF THE APRIL 15 SECOND ROUND ELECTIONS CHANGED THAT PICTURE, HOWEVER. FOR, IN CORDOBA AND ALFONSIN STRONGHOLD WHERE THE UCR SEEMED TO HAVE AN EXCELLENT CHANCE OF WINNING THE GOVERNORSHIP, THEY LOST--- AND LOST BADLY. IN THE FEDERAL CAPITAL, ON THE OTHER HAND, FERNANDO DE LA RUA, A CANDIDATE MORE CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH THE BALBIN WING THAN WITH THAT OF ALFONSIN, WON HANDILY. BALBIN' S FALTERING POSITION WAS THUS SHORED UP. (THOUGH THE LOSS IN CORDOBA WAS NOT A TOTAL MINUS FOR ALFONSIN, HAD VICTOR MARTINEZ, THE UCR GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE THERE, WON, AS THE

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ONLY UCR GOVERNOR IN ARGENTINA, INEVITABLY HE WOULD HAVE BECOME A STRONG CANDIDATE FOR PARTY LEADER, CHALLENGING THE LEAD OF ALFONSIN). BALBIN WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY STEP ASIDE OR BE VOTED OUT AS LEADER AT THE PARTY CONGRESS NEXT YEAR (IF NOT SOONER). MEANWHILE, HOWEVER, HE IS FINDING ENOUGH SUPPORT, IF NOT TO IMPOSE HIS OWN VIEWS AND POLICIES, AT LEAST TO FORCE ALFONSIN TO COMPROMISE.

3. ESSENTIALLY, THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO MEN, THEIR VIEWS AND POLICIES, ARE AS FOLLOWS: ALFONSIN WISHES TO MOVE THE PARTY TOWARD A POSITION OF OPPOSITION FROM THE LEFT, CRITICIZING PERONIST POLICIES AND PROGRAMS FOR NOT BEING SUFFICIENTLY RADICAL. HE WOULD ALSO FAVOR AN ATTEMPT TO ATTRACT TO THE UCR BANNER SOME OF THE ANTI-PERONISTS NOW ENCAMPED WITHIN ALENDE-SUELDO'S ALIANZA POPULAR. MORE IMPORTANTLY, ALFONSIN, THOUGH UNDERSTANDING THE NEED TO TAKE A CONSTRUCTIVE VIEW AND COOPERATE WITH THE PERONIST, WISHES TO RESTRICT ANY RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM. BALBIN, ON THE OTHER HAND, FAVORS A CLOSER RELATIONSHIP AND WISHES THE UCR TO REMAIN ON CENTER RATHER THAN MOVING TO THE LEFT. BALBIN PROBABLY WILL NOT ACCEPT THE AMBASSADORIAL POST IN THE UNITED NATIONS WHICH REPORTEDLY HE HAS BEEN OFFERED BY CAMPORA. BUT HE APPARENTLY DID FAVOR THE IDEA OF HAVING OTHER UCR MEMBERS ACCEPT ANY MINISTERIAL POST THE PERONIST MIGHT OFFER AND HE WANTED THE PARTY COUNCILS TO LEAVE SUCH DECISIONS UP TO THE CONSCIENCE OF EACH MEMBER.

4. IN A LENGTHY AND HARD - FOUGHT MEETING ON MAY 15, THE TWO SIDES WORKED OUT A COMPROMISE (SEE REFTEL). THE BALBIN FORCES CONCEDED THAT AS A POLICY THE UCR WOULD NOT ACCEPT ANY CABINET POSITIONS, EITHER AT THE MINISTERIAL OR SUBMINISTERIAL LEVEL. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, THE ALFONSIN FORCES AGREED THAT THOSE WHO CHOSE, AS INDIVIDUALS, TO ACCEPT SUCH POSTS, WOULD NOT BE DISCIPLINED BY THE PARTY. FURTHER, THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT MEMBERS MIGHT ACCEPT OTHER POSITIONS, SUCH AS AMBASSADORIAL POSTS, WAS NOT CLARIFIED. CLEARLY, NEVERTHELESS, THE WAY IS OPEN TO RADICALES TO ACCEPT SUCH POSTS, FOR IF THEY WILL NOT BE DISCIPLINED FOR ACCEPTING CABINET SLOTS, THEY CERTAINLY WILL NOT BE FOR ACCEPTING AMBASSADORSHIPS .

5. RUMORS CONTINUE TO CIRCULATE THAT ANTONIO TROCCOLI, UCR LEADER IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, WILL BE MINISTER OF ECONOMY. IN A RECENT LUNCHEON CONVERSATION WITH AN EMBASSY OFFICER, TROCCOLI

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NOT ONLY FLATLY DENIED THESE RUMORS BUT ALSO SAID HE WOULD URGE OTHER RADICALES NOT TO ACCEPT HIGH POSITIONS OFFERED BY THE PERONISTS. HE SAID HE FAVORED THE FULLEST APPROPRIATE COOPERATION WITH THE PERONISTS, BUT DID NOT BELIEVE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

IMPLIED THE NECESSITY OF A MIXED CABINET.

6. ONE THORNY PROBLEM STILL TO BE WORKED OUT CENTERS AROUND THE MAYORALTY OF BUENOS AIRES-- AN IMPORTANT FEDERAL APPOINTIVE POSITION.

ACCORDING TO SOME RADICALES, THE UNWRITTEN AGREEMENT WITH THE PERONISTS WAS THAT WHOEVER WON THE MOST VOTES FOR SENATOR IN THE CAPITAL WOULD ALSO GET THE MAYOR'S SLOT. ONE RADICAL, SANCHEZ JAUREGUI, FLEW TO MADRID RECENTLY TO URGE PERON TO APPOINT UCR SENATOR- ELECT FROM THE FEDERAL CAPITAL, RAUL ZARRIELLO, MAYOR (OR INTENDENTE)

OF THE CITY. THE UCR LATER ANNOUNCED THAT JAUREGUI HAD NO AUTHORITY TO MAKE SUCH AN APPROACH-- AND JAUREGUI'S MOTIVES DID SEEM RATHER SUSPECT, SINCE HE, AS SENATORIAL ALTERNATE, WOULD STEP IN AS SEANTTOR IF ZARRIELLO WERE OFFERED AND ACCEPTED THE INTENDENTE JOB. NONETHELESS, ZARRIELLO HAS NOT SAID HE WOULD NOT ACCEPT THE SLOT IF IT WERE OFFERED AND IT IS KNOWN THAT HIS POLITICAL MENTOR, JULIAN SANCERNI GIMENEZ WANTS HIM TO TAKE IT.

7. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, WHETHER BALBIN, ALFONSIN OR SOMEONE ELSE, IS TO SECURE THE PARTY LEADERSHIP HINGES VERY MUCH ON THE QUESTION OF WHAT KIND OF OPPOSITION IS DEEMED APPROPRIATE IN THE FACE OF THE PERONIST GOVERNMENT. AND THAT IS A QUESTION WHICH WILL NOT BE DECIDED UNTIL THE SHAPE AND THRUST OF THAT GOVERNMENT BECOME MORE CLEARLY DISCERNIBLE. WHETHER IT BE OPPOSITION FROM THE LEFT OR CENTER, AND WHETHER THE DEGREE OF COOPERATION BE SOMEWHAT GREATER

OR SOMEWHAT LESS, IT IS ALREADY CLEAR THAT THE UCR INTENDS TO COOPERATE AND TO PLAY A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE, THAT OF LAYAL OPPOSITION. AFTER THIRTY YEARS OF ANIMOSITY, THE UCR AND PERONISTS ARE WALKING CAUTIOUSLY DOWN THE SAME PATH. AS UCR SENATE LEADER, EX. VICE-PRESIDENT (UNDER ILLIA) CARLOS PERETTE, PUT IT SEVERAL DAYS AGO; " THE UCR HAS NO INTENTION OF REPRODUCING A STYLE OF OPPOSITION REMINISCENT OF 1946"

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